

Advance Statement of Evidence: Steeve Charland

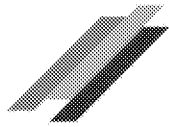
- Questions pertaining to this anticipatory statement of evidence should be directed to Gabriel Poliquin and Alexandra Heine.
- Commission counsel expect Mr. Charland to provide the following evidence if called to testify at the public hearings:

Background

- Mr. Charland resides in the Grenville-sur-la-Rouge region of Québec.
- Mr. Charland is self-employed in the firewood business.
- Previously, Mr. Charland was involved in the group "la Meute" as a board member. He left "la Meute" in 2019 due to disagreements with the direction the group was taking. Notably, some of the group's leaders were making money from the group's activities.
- Mr. Charland is currently the spokesperson for the movement known as the Farfadaas. He is the sole spokesperson. The Farfadaas are a group of approximately 300 men and women who promote justice and care for the "forgotten". The forgotten are the vulnerable in society - those who are poor and cannot get by because they receive no help or support from governments. Les Farfadaas provides the help and support that the forgotten need by undertaking fundraising campaigns and using the funds raised to buy groceries for people who need them. The forgotten ones get in touch with the Farfadaas to ask for help through social media.
- The Farfadaas are also active in social and political activism. Although they have been active in some protests against government-imposed health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic (including the Freedom Convoy), their broader concerns relate to a lack of engagement by the government with their constituents and a lack of accountability and transparency. In addition, they argue that their voices are excluded from the mainstream media, and that there is no other forum that promotes and sustains open debate on policy and social issues.
- Mr. Charland's concerns are consistent with those of the Farfadaas. He opposes the representative mandate and supports an imperative mandate.

Participation in the Freedom Convoy prior to the invocation of the *Emergencies Act*

- Mr. Charland and the Farfadaas did not join the Freedom Convoy immediately, as they had no interest in making common cause with western truckers protesting health measures that particularly affected them. Mr. Charland changed his mind when he learned that the protest was broader in scope and attracted a very large number of demonstrators.
- To organize everyone, Charland texted other members of the Farfadaas to meet on Highway 50 near Lachute, Quebec. Mr. Charland also addressed the Farfadaas and



the general public by posting a live message on Facebook indicating that he was joining the demonstration in Ottawa. The Farfadaas and other members of the public interested in their movement then moved to Gatineau where they rented a parking lot on private property owned by Zibi (and Groupe Marc Dubé).

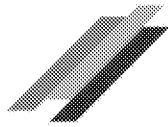
- During the Freedom Convoy, Charland and other members of the Farfadaas organized marches from Gatineau to Parliament. They also organized and provided meals for those who needed them, whether it was the participants of the Freedom Convoy or people in need. They had a canteen stand in the Gatineau parking lot and another in front of Parliament.
- The atmosphere among the members of the Farfadaas was festive and family-like. There was no violence, hate speech or intolerance, apart from an isolated incident that took place in the Zibi parking lot. Mr. Charland will testify that the general atmosphere on Wellington Street and in downtown Ottawa was festive and peaceful.
- With respect to the objectives of his participation in the Freedom Convoy, Mr. Charland's ultimate goal was not to force the government to lift all public health measures on COVID-19, as he is not an expert in public health. Rather, his goal was to encourage a two-way, balanced debate about health measures, to protect his right to make his own decisions about his body, and, more generally, to encourage the government to listen to the demands of the demonstrators and thereby give voice to the most disadvantaged in society.
- For Mr. Charland, the demonstrations would have been successful if one or more members of the government had come out of their offices to listen to and dialogue with the protesters. If this objective had been achieved, the Farfadaas and their supporters would have gone home of their own accord.

Interactions with Police

- Mr. Charland interacted with members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on January 30 when they denied the Farfadaas and their supporters access to downtown Ottawa via the Portage Bridge. Mr. Charland negotiated with the RCMP who then escorted them to the MacDonald Bridge.
- At the Zibi parking lot, Charland interacted with the Gatineau police. Their communications were good and productive, and focused primarily on the safety of the occupants, their facilities and vehicle traffic.

Interactions with the other leaders of the Freedom Convoy and the blockages at the ports of entry

- Mr. Charland did not know the leaders of the Freedom Convoy or the leaders and participants of the Port of Entry Blockades, nor did he follow them on social media.
- Furthermore, during the course of the convoy, he had no communication with these individuals, other than a brief communication at the beginning of the convoy with one of the official leaders, Pat King, who wanted to participate in the convoy and



was seeking accommodation.

Financing

- The Farfadaas raised funds during the Freedom Convoy through direct donations and income from the Farfaboutique, an online shop that sells Farfadaas-themed items. This money transited through Mr. Charland's account, who then redistributed it to fund the food and fuel provided to the protesters.

The Zibi Injunction

- Until Zibi sought the injunction, the Farfadaas and their supporters occupied the parking lot pursuant to an agreement between Sonia Bertrand and Zibi which provided for the rental of the parking lot in exchange for daily payments and an undertaking to keep the lot safe and in good condition.
- Mr. Charland will testify that the Farfadaas and their supporters respected their commitments under the agreement: the parking lot remained safe and in good condition and Mr. Charland made the required daily payments.
- On or about February 10, Zibi, the owner of the parking lot where the Farfadaas and their supporters were located, refused to receive Mr. Charland's payments and filed an application for an injunction in the Quebec Superior Court against "all unknown persons occupying Zibi, including Steeve Charland", to have the Farfadaas leave the parking lot. The Court granted the injunction application on or about February 15, 2022.
- Mr. Charland, the Farfadaas and their supporters complied with the Court's order and left the parking lot. Mr. Charland left the Ottawa area to return home on or about February 18, 2022, so he was not in Ottawa when the demonstration was dismantled. Mr. Charland moved to Van Kleeck Hill on February 26.

The Freedom Convoy after the invocation of the *Emergencies Act*

- In the days following the invocation of the *Emergencies Act*, Mr. Charland's bank-imposed restrictions on his personal bank account. Two months later, the bank closed his account completely because of his participation in the Ottawa protests.
- He was arrested in Vankleek Hill by the police for his participation in the Ottawa Freedom Convoy protests. He was charged with mischief and counselling an offence that was not committed.